

FIGHTERS FOR FREEDOM OF ISRAEL :

D A I L Y P R E S S B U L L E T I N

No. 26

Tel-Aviv, 17th August, 1948

1) THE NEW CURRENCY AND THE BANK.

("Mivrak")

Economic experts will yet explain to the public the real value of the new currency, that is taking the place of the Palestine Pound. The public will be lectured at length on the gold reserve, foreign currency, rate of exchange and other technicalities connected with money. In the final count, however, the value of the new currency will be largely decided by two factors: the confidence of the average citizen in the Government and the independence it represents and, secondly, in the purchasing power of the new currency.

With respect to the first factor, confidence, the best backing for the new Pound is not gold, hoarded uselessly in a bank, but iron - in the form of arms in the hands of our soldiers, the only security of victory and independence. Since September, 1939, we have witnessed many cases of currency entirely losing its value as a result of military defeat, though the gold reserve of the nation concerned was saved. The fate of the new currency will, accordingly, be decided on the battle-field, with no connection with successful banking operations.

As to the second factor, the purchasing power, the establishment of an official rate of exchange (£1=~~4~~) will prove of little effect. When foreign currency is controlled, as it must be now, the citizen cannot change his money into foreign currency and buy commodities at prices obtaining on the world market. The value of the new pound will then be measured by the value of commodities it will buy on the local market. If the Government does not take steps to reduce the cost of living and to ensure stability on the commodities exchange, paper money will become valueless. The citizen will then abandon the local pound in favour of foreign currency (with the help of the black market), goods and real estate (with the help of the speculator). As a

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result the value of the money will decline even more. A vicious circle will be formed, which will prove difficult to break. The first victims will be people of modest means.

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The currency reform must, therefore, by an appropriate action in the field of politics, conduct of war, as well as in the economic sphere. The value of the banknotes will serve a measure of the success of the Government. This value will be more eloquent of the measure of confidence placed in the Government by the people than any election results.

As to the reform itself, it cannot be accepted otherwise than with satisfaction and approval. Currency legislation is a sign of independence. It is, however, to be regretted that the right to issue currency was given, by a special charter, exclusively to the Anglo-Palestine Bank. The name evokes sad associations. It is a remnant of the era when London was the financial centre of the world. It is a remnant of faith in England and her good will. That era is past. London has lost its position. Our faith in England has cost us oceans of blood and innumerable victims. What is worse, the Bank is English not only by name: it is registered in Britain and is subject to British laws.

Almost before the man in the street had a chance to see the new money, the London correspondent of the "Haaretz" sent in his report on the announcement made in London by a spokesman of the Bank. According to him, the Anglo-Palestine Bank is not going to become Israel's State Bank, but will remain a private concern; as to the new pound, it will be linked with the Pound Sterling.

The announcement is likely to dampen the joy caused by the issue of our own currency. As in its foreign policy, the Government is still tied to the past and is afraid to cut loose of all foreign factors. The fact is likely to give rise to public mistrust. The people is not interested in a mere change of form. It wants a radical, material change. It wants to shake off the chains and to consolidate its freedom and independence.

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As long as the Anglo-Palestine Bank remains by name and legally a British company, it has to be treated with some reserve.

People that wants a Government entirely free of any foreign influence and of hankering after Imperialist powers, will prefer to give its trust to independent money, issued by an independent Jewish national bank.

2) THE SAGA OF ABU GOSH.

("Haboker", 16.8.48.)

(The end)

Abu Gosh and L.H.Y.

Sheikh Yousef learned first about the existence of L.H.Y. from a paper. After trying for a year, he managed to get in touch with them (without the aid of the "Hashomer Hatzair", Dr. Magnes or Prof. Buber) through a man named Elhannan (present at the party, sitting near Abu Gosh).

"Then I had to win their confidence, but that was comparatively easy. I hated the British. I saw that all their actions were directed to one end - to rule our country. They could do it only by making use of racial hate. Being an Arab I knew very well that they were doing their utmost to keep us at loggerheads with the Jews. I also hated the Mufti and all those who would not let us live in peace. Husseinis rose to power and dominated the Arabs of Palestine with the help of the British. My views were known among Arabs and I had many enemies. I may mention that the first Husseinis, who came here from Hejaz 250 years ago, enjoyed the hospitality of the house of my grandfather's grandfather.

"When I established contact with L.H.Y. I informed them that I was organising a small Arab group. They agreed. I explained to them that by recruiting Arab members we could establish bases in Arab villages. They realised that Arab bases were more convenient for operations. I recruited at first 10 men, who formed my group and took orders from me. In five years their number rose to 70. I placed my house and my village at the disposal of L.H.Y. Fearing betrayal, we kept our activities secret, but not a single man in the village ever betrayed us to the British police. In L.H.Y. I improved my Hebrew, which I had first learned at Ma'aleh Hahamisha.

"You may ask me why I did not join the Haganah or any other organisation preaching a Jewish-Arab co-operation. The reason was that I believed that only L.H.Y. were really waging war against

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the British. Wanting to achieve such an exalted ideal as a true understanding between the Jews and Arabs, I had to drive out the British first. It was not easy. I had also to wage war against some Arabs who, wittingly or unwittingly, were British hirelings.

A newspaperman interposed a question: "You are a very rich man. Don't you know that L.H.Y. are now leaning towards the left extremism?" Sheikh Yousef was not dismayed. "I am a member of L.H.Y.", he said, "pledged to life-long service. I can tell you that I shall always act in accordance with the orders I get from my commander. This is also the view of my other Arab comrades. There are among our fighters a number of Husseinis, who have realised what an evil spirit took possession of their family. L.H.Y. fighters proceeded from my house and from some other houses in the vicinity to make many attacks on the British. I took part in the attack on the Police Headquarters in Jerusalem. The British will be dumbfounded when they learn from what mountain retreats L.H.Y. made their attacks on them.

No Secrets from Arabs.

"My activities could not remain unobserved by ~~xxxx~~ Arabs. They knew I had connections with Jews, but never suspected it was with L.H.Y. But from the reports of informers the police concluded that I was in contact with the Jewish Underground. Cotton of C.I.D. tried, through the medium of the Moslem Brotherhood in Jerusalem, to turn me into a British agent. The Brotherhood approached me, stating that according to information I had connections with Jews, so they expected me, as a good Arab, to work for the C.I.D. I denied everything and rejected the offer. The British police would not arrest me, hoping to be able to entangle me in their snares. Several times I was threatened with assassination. My house was once attacked by a band of Arabs, led by Cotton. They tried to intimidate me. Maintaining connection with the Underground became difficult. I had to be very cautious.

Jewish-Arab Brotherhood.

"I believe", he said with an emphasis, "in the brotherhood of the Arabs and Jews. This is the ideal I have fought and shall fight for. I am prepared to sacrifice my life for my convictions. This is not a mere phrase. I fought in the ranks of L.H.Y. and was arrested by the British for my views. I am sure that when the time comes, thousands of Arabs will flock to our ranks. They will realise, as I do now, the truth of a true brotherhood.

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After Geulah Cohen's Escape.

Then Yousef passed to what followed Geulah Cohen's escape.

"The trouble rose when the Police arrested our two men, who had raised the squabble that enabled Geulah to escape. They were arrested the next day, when the Police realised that the quarrel had beenfaked. They were cruelly tortured. The Police believed that I was behind them, but could not make them speak. The only answer they gave their torturers was contempt.

"On the day of their arrest I fled to Tel-Aviv. I met members of the Underground and they hid me for three days. Then I went to live with a young Jew, named Ya'agov. He was a traitor and betrayed me to the police. I did not know at the time that he was an agent of Alexander, a C.I.D. officer who was notorious for the way in which he tortured his victims. On my fourth night there the police came to arrest me. I went out to meet them with a pistol in hand, ready to fire. At that time we had strict orders not to surrender without making resistance. But the pistol did not work and I threw it on a housetop. So they got me."

When Yousef came to the story of his arrest, he gnashed his teeth. His eyes blazed with fire. He did not know how to begin.

In Prison.

"My friends of L.H.Y. took revenge on that Alexander. They killed him.

"I was taken first to Jaffa. They treated me with respect. Failing to get anything out of me, they sent me to Jerusalem. On the way there our party stopped at my house in Abu Gosh and nearly destroyed it. They accused me of giving aid to L.H.Y. and asked me how much did I get for my services. They dug in houses and interrogated my wife and members of my family. They failed completely and took me to Jerusalem. There they tried to induce me to start working for the C.I.D. so as to avoid being tortured.

Torture.

"I denied everything, so they sent me to the special prison for terrorists in Ramallah. I was tortured there for seventy days and nights. Without food or water, covered with filth, I was subjected to interrogations accompanied by most terrible tortures; of some of them I am ashamed to speak. My family, though free, suffered no less. Police paid visits to the village and interrogated the inhabitants. The family was often driven out and the house searched. But none of our people told them anything.

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"Once they put before me LP 500 and a pistol and said: 'Look, we give you freedom, pistol and money. You are an Arab, why won't you work with us against your enemies?' I wanted to tell them what I thought, but said instead 'I am not a police agent'. Finally I was sent to the Acre Prison. There I established connection with L.H.Y. prisoners and together we started making plans of escape.

Conspiracy to Assassinate.

"In the meantime I learned from an Arab warder, who was one of my men and a member of L.H.Y., that Cotton got two Arab prisoners, condemned to life, to murder me in the prison. They were to stage a fight in which I was to be killed. I decided to take steps against that. The same night I addressed the Arab prisoners, explaining to them that I was fighting against the British in order to drive them out of the country. My speech had the desired effect and then I disclosed the conspiracy against me. The wrath of the prisoners against my would be assassins was so great that it was with much difficulty that I saved them.

"The Police did not like the influence I gained in the Acre Prison, so they transferred me to Nablus, where I remained in prison until released a few months ago. I can tell you that Abdul Kader el Hussein was to kill me on my leaving the prison (such was apparently the C.I.D. plan), but with the help of my men I managed to make a quick getaway."

So ended the story of his adventures. Then Yousef Abu Gosh added gravely: "You may think that my life is in danger, but you are wrong. I am sure that thousands of Arabs will yet follow me. I am speaking to you as a local Arab. I fail to understand why should Fares el Hourri (who is not even a Syrian) speak on behalf of Palestine Arabs."

3) SUMMARY OF SPEECHES DELIVERED AT THE MASS MEETING HELD IN JERUSALEM BY THE FIGHTERS FOR THE FREEDOM OF ISRAEL on 15th August, 1948.

Geulah Cohen spoke of her special ties with Jerusalem. It was in Jerusalem that she had been sentenced to imprisonment; Jerusalem which beckoned to her from afar when she escaped from the women's prison at Bethlehem; and in Jerusalem that she slipped out of the clutches of the British. She escaped in the guise of a veiled Moslem woman because this garb had always tickled the romantic palate of the British.

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The under-privileged Jewish quarters of Jerusalem gave her shelter. To-day, she had strolled through the same streets and into the same Government Hospital from which she had fled, and there were no longer any Britons. But only a few hundred yards away the walled Old City blackened the horizon, and there the British still ruled with the aid of the Arabs. Complete liberation would come only after the Old City and the Temple Area were freed. The Temple was always the diadem of the Kingdom of Israel. There was no Temple without a kingdom and no Kingdom without a Temple.

The speaker recalled the many generations which had fought with fanatical devotion for the Temple Area. The Temple was a symbol of liberty and was destined still to be the symbol of freedom. She concluded by reading a poem by the bard of Jewish freedom, the seer of the battle for freedom, the Hebrew Walt Whitman - Uri Zvi Greenberg.

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Dr. Israel Scheib in his speech contended that the Government of Israel were unable to carry out their act of treachery in Jerusalem. Jerusalem had overcome them against their will. There was apparently some magnet in Jerusalem, and today everyone demanded it as the capital. Today, too, the return of the central institutions to Jerusalem was being discussed. But before even one such institution was restored to the city, it was essential to bring here one important body - the General Staff of the Army of Israel.

There was a fresher atmosphere in Jerusalem. Its perspectives were much better. A triumphant battle assuring peace could only be waged from this city. Let the demand come from this meeting: the General Staff of the Army of Israel must be transferred to Jerusalem. But as the Government of Israel had not yet comprehended the significance of the step and was lagging in such comprehension, the fear continued to be rife that the Government was still capable of retreat and still liable to agree to leaving Jerusalem outside the boundaries of the State.

Dr. Scheib therefore announced that the Headquarters of the Fighters for the Freedom of Israel was being transferred to Jerusalem. It was well that the United Nations Observers should know this, as should all those who hoped to arrest the tides of history against the will and the interest of the Jewish people. Let Abdullah know this, too, he who had hoped to be king, at least in the walled Old City. The Fighters for the Freedom of Israel hereby inform him: you shall not be king, neither you nor any other British agent, nor the son of any other nation. "No stranger shall sit upon his seat"... and the Seat of David was in the Old City. The Temple was not a question of mysticism; the Temple was the nerve-centre, the link between body and spirit.

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The Ninth of Av was the historic occasion on which the Army of Israel should and could have captured the Old City. It was on this day that the First and Second Temples and Bethar were destroyed. A day of mourning should have become a day of liberation. There were no military reasons for putting off that liberation. The reasons were political and were inadequate. The Arabs had broken the truce in the most revolting manner at Latrun. Instead of giving them the proper reply, the Government had besought the U. N. to fix a date; but the U. N. would prescribe the date in accordance with the interest of those who ruled that organisation - the Anglo-Saxon powers. They did not want to see a large and strong Jewish State come into being. The Soviet Envoy had come to Eretz Israel direct from Moscow; but the American Envoy - even though he was an honest man who liked Jews and supported Zionism - found it proper to travel to Eretz Israel via London and the Vatican. What had James MacDonald done there? American policy apparently had to take into consideration the views of the British and the Pope, and these, as was known, were not among the more enthusiastic supporters of the redemption of the people of Israel. They wanted to exploit the sanctity of the Holy City for political motives. But if the Holy City were indeed Holy, it was primarily for the Jews: because the roots of the sanctity which Christianity revered were in our own sacred tenets.

The Jewish steel would not halt before the walls. The city would be liberated entirely and the Temple would be built. But there would be no more sacrifices in this Temple. The vast sea of our blood which had been shed in the Diaspora was a sufficient atonement. Nor would the tithe of the pauper be brought to Jerusalem any longer. There would be no poor in the Jewish land because its regime would be one of justice and equality.

The speaker ended by appealing to architects to sit down before their drawing boards and prepare the plans for the Temple. This was the last Fast which Israel would observe. Next year the foundation stone would be laid for our edifice of the Temple.

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